

EDAD 639 – Administrative Practicum  
Chadron State College  
Reflection #2  
Kellen Conroy  
November 30, 2014

Administrative Log: November 2014

Documented Learning Experiences:

1. AdvancED Mini-Visit (ESU #1 School District) – Dr. Bob Uhing, ESU #1
2. BYOC Training for ESU #1 Districts – Dr. Bob Uhing, ESU #1

Addressed ISLLC Standard:

**Standard #1:** A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community.

**Standard #2:** A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.

Standard Indicators:

1. Evaluate the extent to which school improvement goals are being accomplished.
2. Develop a process to evaluate the implementation of a new instructional program

**AdvancED Mini-Visit**  
**November 4, 2014**

The continuous school improvement process is vital to not only the continued development and evolution of the school system, but to the overall quality of education provided by a school. In an effort to analyze continuous school improvement, districts in the state of Nebraska can choose from two different models for school improvement. Schools, buildings, and/or districts can choose to embark on the continuous school improvement process through the Nebraska Frameworks model or through AdvancED.

Both models, Nebraska Frameworks and AdvancED, support continuous school improvement, but there are significant differences that exist between the two. I have the opportunity, through my position as a staff developer at an ESU, to be an AdvancED school improvement coach for one of our twenty-three school districts within ESU #1's boundaries. I have also served on an AdvancED external review team and have gone through the process as a teacher in my former educational setting. One of the most important things that I have learned and can clearly relate to while working with the continuous school improvement process is that "creating and sustaining a culture for learning and growth in schools is critical to student success" (Hackmann, et.al., 2002, pg. 98).

The school in which I have been working with as a school improvement coach has selected to use AdvancED as its model for continuous school improvement. In order to be deemed an accredited educational institution by AdvancED, schools must meet high standards of educational quality. In all, there are five standards in which schools must demonstrate a competency of and provide evidence of practices/actions that relate to the standards. In addition, schools must host an external visit every five years, which led by a team of educators, determines if the school meets the standards for accreditation. Schools can elect to have a "mini-visit" as a form of a check up on the progress from the last external review.

The mini-visit for the district was held recently and the team that conducted the visit provided support on items that the district continually is working to improve on. It was interesting to participate in a mini-visit from the "coach" point of view. My colleague and I were there to support the district and provide assistance if asked. The

school improvement process has to be owned by the school and as coaches; we cannot make the process our own. If we were to make the process our own, the school improvement process would not be effective nor would the most appropriate outcomes of the process be acquired.

When reflecting upon the school improvement process that I have been a part of with the school district, I often think about the effectiveness of the entire school system. Continuous school improvement is not a one-person job, nor should it be a secluded group of educational professionals that complete required components. Administrators and educational leaders must promote, facilitate, and foster a culture that promotes continuous school improvement. Hackmann et.al. (2002) states, “to ensure the quality in the school setting, leaders must work closely with their staff to transform the culture to one that promotes a willingness to continually analyze every aspect of the organization with an eye toward quality” (pg. 42). In addition leaders must ensure that all staff, certified and classified, are supported and provided opportunity to take an active role in the continuous school improvement process. Only when an educational leader is operating under a mode of systems thinking and systems participation will the school improvement process be capable of producing effective educational outcomes.

**BYOC Training for ESU #1 Districts**  
**November 17 – 18, 2014**

“Successful instructional leadership recognizes that society and the times have changed, and that past practices that were effective in the past, even the recent past, need to be reexamined in light of today’s societal realities” (Hackmann, et.al., 2002, pg. 65). In the age of high stakes testing and accountability for

administrators, teachers, and schools, defining and developing a sound curriculum is vital to the success of the development of a school culture centered on teaching and learning. The curriculum develop process has taken many forms throughout the history of education ranging from past examples such as “Curriculum on the Wall” to newer strategies with the use of technology. According to Hackmann et.al. (2002), “for schools to be successful, the curriculum must be both structurally sound and continuously reviewed and refined” (pg. 71). Build Your Own Curriculum (BYOC) is a tool that helps schools develop, organize, and implement a seamless K-12 curriculum.

The week of Nov. 17<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> was devoted to the curriculum development process with ESU #1 school districts working towards aligning, developing, and organizing Language Arts curriculum based upon the newly adopted Nebraska English/Language Arts Standards. In order to complete the monumental task of aligning, developing, and organizing curriculum, the schools were using BYOC to aid in the greatly important task. Hoyle et.al. (1998) offer a clear vision of the curricular process by stating, “when curriculum is truly aligned, school districts define the curriculum and write it down; teachers use the curriculum documents to plan and deliver instruction; students are taught in a manner that enables them to reach mastery of the curriculum; and students are then able to demonstrate that mastery on teacher-made tests and district, state, and national assessments” (pg. 73). Whether the curricular tool is BYOC or another, the main goal of the development of curriculum is to create, implement, and constantly review a plan for teaching and learning.

Reflecting upon the curriculum work days from the perspective of my role as a staff developer, I believe that the work the teachers/district representatives completed was greatly important and will have a direct impact on student achievement. In order to better serve our schools, our staff development team as participated in BYOC training and built curriculums for a variety of courses. If teachers and school representatives are asked to complete a task, my philosophy as an educational leader is that I should be expected and able to complete the same tasks. It was important to remind participants that curriculum work is never easy and will take time create, organize and implement. In addition, a school's curriculum is never truly completed. It should be a living, breathing document that is constantly evolving to best meet the needs of the students and teachers.

When I had the chance to examine the sessions from the administrative/educational leader perspective, I found myself coming back to a quote that I had recently come across. "Successful school administrators must be able to oversee the design of curriculum and the development of a strategic plan that enhances teaching and learning in multiple contexts" (Hoyle, English, & Steffy, 1998, pg. 69). School administrators and educational leaders need to ensure that a collaborative environment is established when it comes to the development of new curriculum or the redesigning of current curriculum. Administrators must promote and provide an environment that is conducive to grade-level team discussions, whole staff curricular discussions, and time. Time is of limited quantity throughout the school day and year, but time is a vital component of the curricular process. Curriculum is an extremely important component of the educational process and if

the work is to be completed appropriately, time for discussions and work must not be cut short.

In addition to providing time and resources for efficient and effective curriculum work, administrators must also roll up their sleeves and take part in the work as well. Administrators are not only building managers, but more importantly, instructional leaders. Curriculum is the road map for instruction and as the first learner and instructional leader; the building administrator must have a profound working knowledge of the curriculum and the design process. One never knows when he or she will need to step into a classroom as a substitute or what needs to be addressed/praised during walk-throughs and evaluations.

#### References:

- Hackmann, D.G., Schmitt-Oliver, D.M., & Tracy, J.C. (2002). *The standards-based administrative internship*. Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, Inc.
- Hoyle, J.R. English, F.W., & Steffy, B.E. (1998). *Skills for successful 21<sup>st</sup> century school leaders: Standards for peak performers*. Arlington, VA: American Association of School Administrators.